

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT:  
A COMPARISON OF GENERALS ZINNI AND POWELL

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## ABSTRACT

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The intent of this paper is to compare and contrast the developmental experiences of two military leaders who have successfully performed at the strategic level in the United States military and government. I will subjectively compare their careers to assess experience similarities that could suggest assignment paths that contribute to successful strategic leadership competency development. For the purpose of this assessment I will compare and contrast the careers of General Anthony Zinni, United States Marine Corps, and General Colin Powell of the United States Army.

I believe that the assessment will demonstrate that exposure to combat, or challenging decision-making in a VUCA environment, opportunities to command increasingly complex organizations, assignments within the Joint and Interagency environment, and opportunities to personally grow through civilian and military education are critical to the competency development for future strategic leaders of the military.

The Army War College classifies the strategic leadership competencies as conceptual, technical, or interpersonal. I will utilize a specific competency within each of the three competency classifications to assess Generals Zinni's and Powell's careers for common developmental experiences.

The experiences of each General in combat, adult education, leadership and command positions, joint assignments, and multinational or interagency environments will be compared to assess developmental experiences that contributed to gaining competency in frame of reference development, Joint, Interagency, Multinational, and Intra-agency relationships, and consensus building skills.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT: A COMPARISON OF GENERALS ZINNI AND POWELL .....	1
<b>DEFINING STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND THE ENVIRONMENT</b> .....	1
<b>STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES FOR ASSESSMENT</b> .....	2
<b>COMPARISON OF CAREER EXPERIENCES AND COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	3
COMBAT EXPERIENCES .....	3
ADULT EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES .....	7
LEADERSHIP/COMMAND EXPERIENCES .....	9
<b>Company Level Command</b> .....	9
<b>Battalion Level Command</b> .....	12
<b>Regiment/Brigade Level Command</b> .....	13
<b>Division Level Experiences</b> .....	14
<b>Marine Expeditionary Force/Corps Level Experience</b> .....	16
<b>Army Forces Command Experience</b> .....	17
JOINT, MULTINATIONAL AND INTERAGENCY EXPERIENCES: .....	17
<b>DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCES VALUABLE TO A STRATEGIC LEADER</b> .....	25
CONCEPTUAL COMPETENCY: FRAME OF REFERENCE DEVELOPMENT .....	25
TECHNICAL COMPETENCY: JOINT, INTERAGENCY, MULTINATIONAL, INTRA- AGENCY DEVELOPMENT.....	27
INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCY: CONSENSUS BUILDING .....	28
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	29
ENDNOTES .....	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	37



## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT: A COMPARISON OF GENERALS ZINNI AND POWELL

The intent of this paper is to compare and contrast the developmental experiences of two military leaders who have successfully performed at the strategic level in the United States military and government. I will subjectively compare their careers to assess experience similarities that could suggest assignment paths that contribute to successful strategic leadership competency development. For the purpose of this assessment I will compare and contrast the careers of General Anthony Zinni, United States Marine Corps, and General Colin Powell of the United States Army. I believe that the assessment will demonstrate that exposure to combat, or challenging decision-making in a VUCA environment, opportunities to command increasingly complex organizations, assignments within the Joint and Interagency environment, and opportunities to personally grow through civilian and military education are critical to the competency development for future strategic leaders of the military.

Both Generals Zinni and Powell have had extremely successful careers in the military and civilian communities. General Zinni retired from the military in the summer of 2000 as the Regional Combatant Commander of Central Command<sup>1</sup>. Subsequent to his military career, General Zinni continued to serve the country in various assignments to include diplomatic missions within his previous combatant command's area of responsibility, and most notably served as the United States Peace Envoy to the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> General Powell retired from the military as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1993.<sup>3</sup> He subsequently was appointed by President George W. Bush as the 65<sup>th</sup> Secretary of State. General Powell served the country in that position until his retirement in January of 2005.<sup>4</sup>

### DEFINING STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND THE ENVIRONMENT

To understand the value of comparing the developmental experiences of Generals Powell and Zinni we must first understand the meaning of Strategic Leadership, the environment in which a strategic leader must operate, and the competencies that contribute to the success of leaders in the strategic environment.

The United States Army War College defines strategic leadership as, "...the process used by a leader to affect the achievement of a desirable and clearly understood vision by influencing the organizational culture, allocating resources, directing through policy and directive, and building consensus within a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous global environment which is marked by opportunities and threats."<sup>5</sup>



A strategic leader must steer his organization to attain his objectives based on a well developed vision.<sup>6</sup> Attaining those objectives is challenging due to the influences of both the internal environment of the organization and external factors.<sup>7</sup> The Army War College utilizes the acronym "VUCA" to describe the nature of the environment in which the strategic leaders must excel. The environment is Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous. Volatility addresses the ever changing information available for the strategic decision maker. Uncertainty describes the elusiveness of a complete picture of a situation or lack of total situational awareness. The complex nature of the environment addresses the broad reaching effects of the decisions made at the strategic level. The leader must consider multiple levels of effects resulting from his decisions or policies. There is ambiguity in the environment due to the multiple perceptions of the issues or challenges at hand, resulting from the various lenses in which an issue can be viewed.

As a leader evolves or develops into a strategic leader, the external environment becomes more relevant to his organization.<sup>8</sup> Some examples of the external environment that a military strategic leader must consider when making decisions or policies would be the American public, the Congress, the multiple departments within the executive branch of the government, and the cultures of the people throughout the world where United States military personnel must operate. To be successful leading at the strategic level, individuals must possess and refine numerous competencies that were probably not as critical early in their careers at the direct leadership level.

## **STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES FOR ASSESSMENT**

There are numerous competencies that leaders must develop to be successful at the strategic level. The Army War College classifies the strategic leadership competencies as conceptual, technical, or interpersonal.<sup>9</sup> I will utilize a specific competency within each of the three competency classifications to assess Generals Zinni's and Powell's careers for common developmental experiences.

The conceptual competency of developing a frame of reference can be assessed based on broad experiences over the expanse of a career.<sup>10</sup> Both Generals Zinni and Powell military careers lasted close to 40 years. Both of their careers included combat experiences early in their careers during the Vietnam War. This will be assessed in greater detail later in the paper. However, General Mike Lynch, U.S. Army (Ret.) addressed the importance of the early combat experiences of General Powell and their relevance to the strategic decision making process when he said, "When a guy is steeped in the moral and ethical issues down at the fighting level

he's more inclined to back off from gross solutions and try to equate what they are saying to how difficult it would be to implement it down where he remembers it."<sup>11</sup>

The technical competency development that I will address in this paper is Joint, Interagency, Multinational, and Intra-agency Relationships.<sup>12</sup> To be successful at the level of military leadership that both General Zinni and Powell achieved, Regional Combatant Commander and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff respectively, they must have developed an understanding working in and with multiple military services, government agencies, and cultures. I will look at key experiences throughout their careers to identify those that contributed to their skills at this level.

I will also look for experiences that contributed to the Generals' abilities in the interpersonal competency of consensus building. The Army War College describes this critical competency at the strategic level as the ability of the commander to achieve his vision or accomplish the task at hand by working with multiple agents, each of whom may possess differing agendas, to achieve solutions that all participants can support.<sup>13</sup>

## **COMPARISON OF CAREER EXPERIENCES AND COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT**

The experiences of each General in combat, adult education, leadership and command positions, joint assignments, and multinational or intra-agency environments will be compared to assess developmental experiences that contributed to gaining competency in frame of reference development, Joint, Interagency, Multinational, and Intra-agency relationships, and consensus building skills. The comparison will begin at the tactical or direct leadership level and conclude upon assumption of their responsibilities as strategic leaders within the military community.

### **COMBAT EXPERIENCES**

General Zinni served two tours in Vietnam. His first tour in Vietnam began in April 1967. General Zinni reported to Vietnam as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Advisor to the South Vietnamese Marine Corps.<sup>14</sup> As an Advisor, Zinni was responsible for coordinating US support to the Vietnamese to include airlift, logistics support, and combined arms fire.<sup>15</sup> General Zinni cites his first experience of a firefight at night as a valuable contribution to his approach in decision-making. He learned to remain calm in the midst of the intense firefights, and to rationally think tactically through the event. This developmental experience would be applicable in many stressful situations later in his career.<sup>16</sup>

It was common practice for Advisors to live with the Vietnamese, share their houses and meals. General Zinni developed a great curiosity for the way they thought and felt. In one

experience a Vietnamese woman asked Zinni why he would leave his family to get involved in the mess of Vietnam. He explained the party line of defeating communism and ensuring freedom of democracy. The woman asked him who was going to defend them from their own government. He realized at this point that the actual population of a country perceives their fate and that of their country from a different perspective than the normally accepted western or American perspective.<sup>17</sup> This experience living in the culture of another country is one example of a contribution to General Zinni's competency for developing a frame of reference to approaching challenges. Learning to consider a culture foreign to your own expands your ability to perceive the second and third order effects of decisions. It also contributed significantly to a desire to learn more about the cultures of the people with whom he would work with in future assignments. This cultural appreciation provided a foundation and improved his appreciation for working in a multi-national environment.

General Zinni's second tour in Vietnam began in 1970. He returned to Vietnam as an Infantry Company Commander. With the combination of serving as an Advisor and then an Infantry Company Commander, General Zinni fought in five different geographic regions of Vietnam against various types of enemy. He fought in mangrove swamps and river complexes, the Mekong Delta rice paddies, the jungles of Cambodian border region, the coastal planes and high mountains of central region, and the colonial plantations and villages around Saigon. General Zinni and his Marines fought against well trained North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars, extremely well trained Viet Cong, and various other lesser trained guerilla organizations. General Zinni realized that lessons learned in one combat environment do not translate directly for application in a different combat environment. The various environments and opponents taught a leader to be resourceful and adaptable. Experience provides you a good perspective to approach combat. However, you must remain open to new ideas and experiences. Applying direct lessons learned from one type of combat to another provides inaccurate modeling and can lead to stereotyping enemies.<sup>18</sup> General Zinni's experience and determination to remain open to new ideas contributed to his ability for developing a broader frame of reference as a strategic leader. Zinni who was a great student of warfare would cite the importance of practical experience in combat when he stated, "...theory is one thing, and playing is another."<sup>19</sup>

Very similar to General Zinni, General Powell first reported to Vietnam to be an Advisor to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). General Powell's experience in combat started at an earlier phase of the combat in Vietnam when he reported to Saigon in December of 1962. General Powell reported to Vietnam as a Captain and was assigned as the senior American

advisor to the 2d Battalion, 3d Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Division, ARVN. This Vietnamese battalion consisted of 400 soldiers and was posted in the A Shau valley near the Laotian border.<sup>20</sup> General Powell was similarly thrust into the multi-cultural learning environment early in his career. Unlike the South Vietnamese Marine Corps that General Zinni advised, General Powell was exposed to an ARVN forces that lacked any type of military tactical discipline at night. It was a rude awakening culturally for General Powell when his Vietnamese Battalion would establish camp fires, exposing their positions, and conduct the slaughter of livestock for their meals while on tactical patrols. General Powell's experience in combat during this tour could be classified at the lower end of intensity, due to the phase of the war and region his unit was operating in. General Powell's Battalion encountered many Viet Cong booby traps and were subject to intermittent sniping and guerilla hit and run tactics.<sup>21</sup> General Powell was medically evacuated from this assignment after seven months as an Advisor to the ARVN infantry battalion. He sustained a serious infection due to stepping on a Punji stake poisoned by animal dung.

After being wounded General Powell was assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> ARVN Division Headquarters in the G-3. General Powell had respected the professional soldiers who were the majority in the battalion where he was the senior advisor. However, as he witnessed the Vietnamese attached to the Division headquarters he was disillusioned by the incompetence and corruption.<sup>22</sup> While assigned at the Division Headquarters General Powell developed an aversion to what he considered "experts". He opined that experts possessed a lot of data but lacked judgment.<sup>23</sup> General Powell also developed opinions about how poorly the war was being pursued by the Department of Defense. He was disappointed in how the Army seemed to be adverse to questioning the tactics being developed by senior department officials. He felt that the Army's attitude was, "If it ain't working, pretend it is, and maybe it will fix itself."<sup>24</sup>

In July of 1968 General Powell returned to Vietnam for a second tour after attending the Army's Command and General Staff College. General Powell was assigned as the Executive Officer of the 3d Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry of the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade in the Americal Division. His primary responsibilities in the battalion were to prepare it for an Inspector General's inspection. The battalion was in a sad state but went on to receive the highest inspection score in the Division. Later the Americal Division Commander saw a picture of General Powell graduating as number two in his class from the Army's Command and General Staff College, and ordered General Powell to report up to the Division to work in the G-3 Plans. However, due to a vacancy in the actual G-3 billet, General Powell, a Major at the time, became the only Division G-3 to hold that rank in Vietnam. As the G-3, General Powell was responsible for planning the

employment of, “nearly eighteen thousand troops, artillery units, aviation battalions, and a fleet of 450 helicopters.”<sup>25</sup>

While serving as the Division G-3, General Powell had an opportunity to brief General Creighton Abrams, the senior US Army General in Vietnam. General Powell impressed Abrams with his comprehensive knowledge of the operational picture within the Division’s area of responsibility.<sup>26</sup> This opportunity to perform the duties of a Division G-3 and provide comprehensive briefings to senior leaders at such a junior rank was rare. It provided General Powell a broader perspective of operational warfare that contributed to his development as a leader. Learning to integrate the efforts of the Division both internally and externally provided an opportunity to develop General Powell’s frame of reference relative to understanding the interdependencies of theater level operations.

General Powell’s second tour in Vietnam came to an end when as the Division G-3 he was in a helicopter crash with the Division Commander, the Chief of Staff, the General’s aide, and the four person crew. General Powell broke his ankle on impact. He, along with the door gunner, pulled the rest of the passengers from the burning wreck of a helicopter.<sup>27</sup> General Powell finished his second Vietnam tour in July of 1969. He formed deep feelings on the relationship of political strategies and how wars are fought. He became resolute that war should be considered a last option in diplomacy. He vowed not to allow political leaders to commit armed forces to conflict without straight and honest military advice if he were ever in a position to provide it.<sup>28</sup>

General Zinni formed strong ethical positions based on his combat experience in Vietnam very similarly to General Powell. As an infantry Company Commander in 1970, General Zinni was severely wounded in an intense firefight. General Zinni required a long recovery time in Vietnam due to extensive surgery before he was stable enough to be medically evacuated to Guam. During that hospital stay he met with a Marine from his company that was injured in the same firefight. His Marine asked him why they were there in Vietnam. General Zinni gave the Marine the standard government’s combating the spread of communism mission rationale. General Zinni became very disappointed in the validity of the answer he had given his Marine. From that point onward he swore to himself that he would never give such a shallow answer to his men again. He also swore that he would never hesitate to put his career at risk to speak out on issues that he felt strongly about and to always do what he felt was right for his men.<sup>29</sup>

It is obvious that both Generals Zinni and Powell developed significantly as leaders and formed strong personal convictions due to the combat experiences in Vietnam. They both were exposed to operating in an environment where strong cultural differences existed. These

experiences provided a foundation for developing an appreciation for the complexity of working in a multi-national environment, which would be critical to both leaders' careers as they assumed strategic leadership positions in the future. Their experiences also provided great opportunities to develop strong appreciation for the interdependency of military operations, and the requirement to be open to multiple sources of perspective to develop the best solutions to the challenges they faced in combat. Although most of these experiences were at the direct leadership level, they provided the foundation on which they would later develop their frames of reference for future strategic leadership decisions.

#### ADULT EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Actual combat experience provided reality based perspective for both Generals early in their careers. Their educational experiences subsequent to this built upon their competencies and enhanced their decision making capabilities and perspective in general. Practical experience combined with special skills training, professional military education, and educational opportunities pursued in the civilian sector are equally important as General Zinni portrays in his quote, "...The warrior profession is a calling, and requires the same kind of dedication the priesthood does." "...That meant I read books about it." "Some of what I picked up from books, or from my instructors, turned out to be bogus." "It was from this seed in low-level tactics that my career started to grow, eventually leading to the construction of multinational strategies at CENTCOM and elsewhere, where I'd be dealing with a part of the world where we were trying to develop a military relationship and military policy."<sup>30</sup>

General Zinni, like General Powell, was commissioned and trained as a basic infantry officer. Due to his selection for Advisor duties in Vietnam he was ordered to attend the Military Assistance, Training, and Advisory (MATA) course at the Army's Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg in 1966. General Zinni learned to speak and write basic Vietnamese.<sup>31</sup> General Powell attended the same course in 1962.<sup>32</sup>

Upon returning from his first tour in Vietnam, General Zinni was assigned an instructor position at the Marine Corps' Officer's basic course, The Basic School, in Quantico, Virginia. General Zinni had an opportunity to pass on his personal lessons learned in combat to the newly commissioned Lieutenants as an instructor for scouting, patrolling, and counter-insurgency operations. After spending a year as an instructor, General Powell attended the Marine Corps' Amphibious Warfare School in 1969.<sup>33</sup> This course is considered career level training for Captains similar to the Army's Infantry Advanced Course.

When General Powell returned from his first tour in Vietnam he was assigned to the Infantry Officer's Advance Course at Fort Benning, GA in 1964. Prior to the beginning of the Infantry Advanced course he attended the Pathfinder's course, and received advanced airborne ranger training.<sup>34</sup> Following completion of the Advance Course, General Powell was assigned as an instructor at the Infantry Officer's Advance Course. General Powell would cite the training he received in communications skills, before assuming his instructor duties, as pivotal experience that he would use later in life as a senior leader.<sup>35</sup> Both Generals Zinni and Powell were military instructors at an early juncture in their careers. The communications skills developed during these similar experiences would be translated later in life to their interpersonal skills competency.

General Zinni attended the Marine Corps' Command and Staff College as a Major in 1977. He would later return to teach operations and tactics at the Staff College in 1981. While an instructor at the Command and Staff College, General Zinni would earn his first civilian Masters Degree in Management and Supervision.<sup>36</sup>

General Powell would also attend his Service's staff college at Leavenworth, Kansas, the Command and General Staff College.<sup>37</sup> Following this educational experience, General Powell would return to Vietnam for his second tour of combat duty. While finishing his second tour in Vietnam, General Powell was notified in June of 1969 that he had been accepted by the George Washington University to attend the Masters program at the School of Government and Business Administration.<sup>38</sup> General Powell had applied for and been accepted to the Army's Graduate Civil Schooling Program while he was a student at the Staff College. This program was designed to fund graduate level education for soldiers if they were accepted into a civilian institution.<sup>39</sup> The Army allowed General Powell to spend two years pursuing this education as his full time assignment. General Powell graduated with a Masters in Business Administration in 1971.<sup>40</sup>

Both Generals Zinni and Powell pursued and attained advanced civilian degrees as Majors. Similarly, both Generals would attend the National War College, part of the National Defense University located at Fort McNair in Washington D.C..<sup>4142</sup> General Powell would credit his studies at the National War College in assisting him to fully comprehend the theory that for a nation to be successful in war, the government, the military, and the people of the nation must be engaged. General Powell felt strongly that this triad was incomplete in the case of the Vietnam War and eventually led to the failure of our nation to achieve its objectives in that war.<sup>43</sup>

Following their prestigious education at one of the nation's top military colleges, both Generals Zinni and Powell would be assigned to strategic-level force development assignments.

General Zinni was assigned to a Chief of Naval Operations Strategic Studies Group. General Zinni spent a year assessing the US Maritime Strategy to develop a future force design. While participating in this project, General Zinni pursued and attained a second Masters Degree. His second degree was in the field of International Relations.<sup>44</sup> General Powell was assigned to the Army's Program Analysis and Evaluation Office. It was in this role that he became associated with a Lieutenant General William E. DePuy. General DePuy was the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and was a critical figure in revamping the US Army after Vietnam. General DePuy assigned General Powell to lead a planning effort to restructure the Army to meet a 500,000 personnel cap if that were ever to be directed by the nation. This experience provided valuable insight to General Powell in the challenges of structuring an Army and the processes that should be considered in a force reduction effort.<sup>45</sup>

The educational experiences of Generals Zinni and Powell provided ample opportunity to broaden their knowledge bases and contribute to the competencies they would require as strategic leaders. The Advanced Courses' and Staff Colleges' curriculum exposed both officers to doctrinal technical knowledge that enriched their competencies within the service capabilities and each services contribution to joint operations. The studies offered by the National War College, combined with their follow-on assignments to future force development, provided great insight to the decisions required of leaders at the strategic level. It also contributed to the generals' appreciation for the interdependencies within the Department of Defense, and facilitated the development of each general's frame of reference for follow-on assignments.

#### LEADERSHIP/COMMAND EXPERIENCES

Both Generals Zinni and Powell commanded in the Joint environment. Generals Zinni and Powell commanded within their services up to the Lieutenant General and General officer level respectively. The comparison within this section will focus on their military service command experiences and will begin at the Company Commander-level and proceed through Battalion, Regimental/Brigade, Division, Marine Expeditionary Force/Corps-level, and in the case of General Powell, Army Forces Command. The competencies gained in joint command positions will be addressed in the following Joint/Coalition Experiences section of the paper.

##### **Company Level Command**

As previously mentioned in the Combat Experiences section, General Zinni was a Company Commander in Vietnam. General Zinni assumed command of A Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines in 1970.<sup>46</sup> General Zinni's company was assigned to a Quick Reaction



Force mission, and was considerably larger and more capable than a standard rifle company. His company consisted of more than 260 personnel and was reinforced by heavier weapons, engineers, military working dogs, and former Viet Cong soldiers known as Kit Carson Scouts.<sup>47</sup> During one of General Zinni's missions his Marines captured the Viet Cong Intelligence Chief for the Quang Da Special Zone.<sup>48</sup> It was on this mission, utilizing information extracted from this intelligence officer, that General Zinni was severely wounded. Despite his injuries, General Zinni's company was successful in capturing the Quang Da Special Zone Viet Cong headquarters. The captured headquarters included valuable intelligence on Viet Cong agents and South Vietnamese officials collaborating with the Viet Cong. General Zinni was awarded the Bronze Star for this action.<sup>49</sup> This period of command reinforced General Zinni's competency in decision-making during stressful, time sensitive situations. His frame of reference was enhanced due to his reflection on what combat can do to his Marines. The importance of working as a team with contributions from all team members was vital to the mission. It is also the associations and reputation developed during his company commander experience that contributed significantly to future assignments that would further develop valuable competencies.

General Zinni's battalion commander during combat in 1970 was LtCol Mick Trainor. LtCol Trainor would go on to serve as a Lieutenant General and as the Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans, Policies, and Operations (G-3) for Headquarters, Marine Corps. In this capacity, LtGen Trainor sought General Zinni's talent, recognized during his command in Vietnam, to stand up the Special Operations and Terrorism Counteraction Office after the barracks bombing in Beirut, 1983. In this position, General Zinni became the Service Headquarters lead action officer for special operations. In this capacity, he then worked very closely with Lieutenant General Al Gray, Commander of the Marine Forces Atlantic and future Commandant of the Marine Corps, to develop special operations capability in the Marine Amphibious Units. Now these organizations are called Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable), MEU (SOC).<sup>50</sup> This experience and effort by General Zinni would have lasting impact on the future organization of the U.S. Marine Corps and the forward deployed capabilities available to the Regional Combatant Commanders. General Zinni's experience in company level command and the staff assignments resulting from that experience contributed to the development of several strategic leadership competencies. Assignment to the Special Operations and Terrorism Counteraction office exposed him to multiple service capabilities and culture that contributed to his knowledge base and competency in joint operations.

After Company Command, General Zinni became the 2d Marine Division Commanding General's Military Aide. In that capacity he worked for two Generals, Major General Haynes, and Brigadier General Poillion. As a Captain, General Zinni realized the importance and challenges associated with General officers receiving straight unfiltered information. He also came to appreciate the complexity of issues faced by General officers by witnessing the multiple factors that must be considered by General officers in their decision making process. This was his first true exposure to the second and third order effects that resulted from senior level decisions. General Zinni was also exposed for the first time to the resource allocation decisions required of senior officers. He gained a greater appreciation of training and operating a force in a resource-constrained environment. General Zinni's experience as the Division Commanders' Aide highlighted that he had a lot to learn, and therefore reinforced his drive to expand his personal and professional knowledge base.<sup>51</sup> His direct observation of several Division Commanders provided insight into the decision making process that requires careful consideration of second and third order effects.

General Powell's Company Commander experience was not in combat. However, they were opportunities to gain valuable insight in direct leadership and the value of including subordinates into the decision making and operational concept. General Powell commanded D Company, 2d Battalion, 48<sup>th</sup> Infantry in Germany during the height of the Cold War, 1959-1960. General Zinni commanded his company as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. The value of basic leadership experience at the entry level provides a valuable frame of reference on how senior level decisions will affect the soldiers at the point of action.<sup>52</sup> General Powell commanded a second Infantry company during 1961 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battle Group, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 2d Infantry Brigade at Ft Devens, Massachusetts. General Powell's Brigade was part of the Strategic Army Corps (STRAC). These organizations were designed to respond to crisis in various environments in short notice. General Powell's assignment to the STRAC forces influenced his perspective on high profile organizations. He witnessed the importance of training readiness as it related to units that were required to be ready to deploy at a moments notice. From this experience, General Powell learned the value of competition as a form of leadership tool. Throughout his career he would promote healthy competition to improve the morale and training proficiency of his units. He also grew to appreciate the possibility of organizations striving to present a perception of heightened readiness without possessing true capabilities. These experiences would affect General Powell's frame of reference and provided a healthy skepticism when it came to dealing with the Services' high profile organizations.<sup>53</sup>

## **Battalion Level Command**

In April of 1980, General Zinni took command of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines as a Major. Commanding an infantry battalion in the Marine Corps as a Major is very rare. He was actually selected for Lieutenant Colonel while in command. During his battalion command, General Zinni was provided ample opportunity to broaden his Joint and Multinational competencies. 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines participated in successful NATO exercises in Norway as part of the Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade concept. His battalion was later assigned as the Battalion Landing Team for the Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) serving as the Landing Force, 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet in the U.S. European Command.<sup>54</sup> The Landing Force for the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet normally deploys to the Mediterranean Sea for a six month period. During that period, the Landing Force participates in multiple amphibious and cross training exercises within the countries of the region. Great experience is gained in the multinational environment, and an appreciation is gained for the various cultures to which you can be exposed.

General Powell was assigned to Korea to command the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 32 Infantry, 2d Infantry Division in the 8<sup>th</sup> Army. His Division Commander was Major General Henry E. Emerson.<sup>55</sup> General Powell took command when the forces in Korea had serious challenges with drugs, racial tensions, and a general lack of discipline.<sup>56</sup> General Powell's command experience consisted of rigorous training, where a higher number of his soldiers were qualified for the Expert Infantry Badge than the combined numbers of three sister infantry battalions in a nearby infantry brigade.<sup>57</sup> The other main focus of his command effort was in fulfilling his Division Commander's Intent titled, "Pro-Life". In this era of low morale and discipline following the Vietnam War, the Major General Emerson instituted multiple programs designed to reduce racial tensions and instill strongly rooted team-oriented morale. The efforts paid off and when General Powell left the Division, incidents of Absent Without Leave (AWOL) were reduced by 50% and reenlistments were increased by 200% since the Pro-Life program was enacted. General Powell and his battalion were heavily involved in this effort.<sup>58</sup> During his battalion command tour General Powell also solidified his personal belief of approaching all endeavors to win. He believed that excellence in the small matters will breed success in large challenges, and that you never send a soldier into a mission that he is not prepared for. These philosophies translated directly to his frame of reference for larger decisions he would face later in life as a senior leader.<sup>59</sup>

## **Regiment/Brigade Level Command**

General Zinni was assigned to command the 9<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment on Okinawa Japan in the late 1980's. This command assignment included the additional responsibility of commanding the Camp Hansen installation. The Camp included over fifty military organizations and tenant organizations, 7,000 Marines and sailors, and over one thousand civilians. The camp also included extensive infrastructure, which required facilities planning and maintenance.<sup>60</sup>

A developmental experience associated with the command of the 9<sup>th</sup> Marines and Camp Hansen was his relationship with the local Okinawan community. General Zinni's responsibilities included maintaining good relations with the community, participating in multicultural communications, and conducting negotiations. General Zinni worked closely with local government officials and participated in many festivals and social events. General Zinni cites this experience as extremely valuable in his future jobs. The cultural interaction obviously contributed to his multinational competency. The active negotiation with the local city government provided great experience in the interpersonal skills competency of consensus building.<sup>61</sup>

While the commander of the 9<sup>th</sup> Marines, General Zinni was tasked with two additional command responsibilities. As a part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Brigade, General Zinni commanded Regimental Landing Team 9. On a larger scale than his experience as a Battalion Landing Team commander, this experience enhanced his professional knowledge and experience in his Services capabilities. Concurrently, the 3d Marine Expeditionary Force was also tasked by the Marine Commandant with forming a new organization call the 31<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU(SOC)). General Zinni was assigned to organize and command this new organization, and it provided General Zinni's with his first experience commanding a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF).<sup>62</sup> The MAGTF is a combined arms organization that seamlessly integrates a Ground Combat Element, Aviation Combat Element, and a Combat Service Support Element controlled and coordinated by a Command Element staff. The assignment as the 31<sup>st</sup> MEU (SOC) provided valuable experience in commanding a combined arms organization very similar to a Joint Task Force. The integration of ground, air, and sustainment operations provided framework development for future assignments.

During General Zinni's command of 31<sup>st</sup> MEU (SOC), his unit was tasked to conduct humanitarian relief operations in south eastern Luzon. The area had suffered severe damage from a hurricane. The area was also an operating area of insurrectionists and terrorists.<sup>63</sup> This

experience of commanding relief operations in a semi-permissive environment provided significant competency development opportunities in both multinational and the interagency environment of non-governmental organizations.

General Powell took command of the 2d Brigade of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in the Spring of 1976, while still a student of the National War College. The command came open early and General Powell would have lost this slot if he had not made an unorthodox arrangement with the College and the Army Manpower department. General Powell convinced both parties to transfer him to the 101<sup>st</sup> and send him back to the college on temporary orders to complete his final work and attend graduation.<sup>64</sup>

General Powell made an immediate impact within the Division in the training arena. He personally completed a rigorous Air Assault qualification at 39 years of age, and ensured all of his officers were Air Assault qualified prior to the return of the Division Commander from an exercise in Europe.<sup>65</sup> General Powell did not have any operational deployments during his command. His focus on training and leadership provided opportunities again to develop his competencies with his services capabilities and direct leadership. Midway through his command, President Carter's National Security Advisor, Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, requested General Powell come to Washington D.C. to be interviewed for a position in the National Security Council staff. Dr. Brzezinski wanted General Powell to run the NSC's defense program staff. General Powell repeatedly stated that he was not interested in the job and that he wanted to return to commanding his soldiers in the 2d Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup>. Dr. Brzezinski allowed General Powell to return to his Soldiers. However, he told General Powell that they would be looking at him again when he was closer to completing his command time.<sup>66</sup>

### **Division Level Experiences**

General Zinni did not command at the Division Level. I will address this oddity in the later section on the Marine Expeditionary Force/Corps Level Experience. General Powell did not command a Division either. However, he did gain experience and competency level as an Assistant Division Commander.

General Powell was assigned as the Assistant Division Commander for Operations and Training in the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Mechanized) in 1981. General Powell was extremely successful early in his assignment due to his drive and passion for training. He impressed the Division Commander, Major General Hudachek, so much that he attempted to get General Powell promoted early to Major General with an early performance evaluation. However, without meeting a minimum evaluation period the attempt was unsuccessful.<sup>67</sup>

Eventually, General Powell noticed that there were serious morale problems within the Division. Some of these challenges could be attributed to the leadership style of the Division Commander and the personality of the commander's wife. General Powell decided that it was his responsibility as a senior subordinate to address these issues with Major General Hudachek. The conversation did not go well and their relationship soured. When the Commanding General provided General Powell his performance evaluation at the end of General Powell's first year as the Assistant Division Commander, Hudachek wrote a report that would effectively end General Powell's career.<sup>68</sup> General Powell believed that he had done the right thing in approaching his commander with what he considered important issues. He did not regret his decision to address his concerns to his commander.<sup>69</sup> The actions taken by General Powell and the reciprocal negative reaction of his commander contributed to General Powell's competency of valuing the input of subordinates. This factor is critical within the Frame of Reference competency.

General Powell's career was saved when senior officers within his chain of command recognized the shortcomings of the Division Commander and the circumstances in which General Powell served. Instead of ending his career he was assigned as the Deputy Commanding General of the Combined Arms Combat Development Activity (CACDA) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The assignment was a Major General's position.<sup>70</sup> General Powell's job was going to be to ensure the various branch schools within the Army taught their soldiers to fight as a Combined Arms team.<sup>71</sup>

While assigned to CACDA, General Powell was tasked by General John Wickham to lead a team of Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels in a study of what path General Wickham should lead the Army when he assumed the position as the Army's Chief of Staff. Development of future concepts and doctrine for the Army provided General Powell significant expertise in service capabilities and additional exposure to the force development process. It was during the outbrief of this study to General Wickham that General Powell heard that he was being considered to return to Washington D.C. to assume the Military Assistant position for the Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger. General Powell resisted this move as he was hoping to be selected for Major General and assume command of a Division. However, the new Chief of Staff of the Army and Secretary Weinberger wanted General Powell in this influential position and General Powell would forgo his opportunity to command an Army Division.<sup>72</sup>

## **Marine Expeditionary Force/Corps Level Experience**

As a newly promoted Major General, General Zinni was slated to command the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division in the summer of 1994. However, in the spring of 1994 the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Mundy, informed General Zinni was that he had been nominated for Lieutenant General and command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF).<sup>73</sup> (BR 286). The 1<sup>st</sup> MEF included the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, the 3d Marine Air Wing, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Force Service Support Group. The 1<sup>st</sup> MEF is the largest MEF in the Marine Corps and consists of upwards of 45,000 Marines and Sailors.<sup>74</sup>

At this point in his career General Zinni was recognized as one of the most experienced senior military officers in Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW). The rationale for this will be explained in the following section on Joint, Multinational, and Interagency Experiences. The Commander of Central Command, General Binnie Peay, tasked the I MEF with the responsibility for MOOTW within his theater of operations.<sup>75</sup> General Peay also tasked General Zinni's I MEF to form the core of a JTF, with General Zinni in command, to conduct the amphibious withdrawal of the United Nation's Somalia (UNOSOM) forces from Somalia. The operation would be called United Shield. The final phase of this operation was completed in March of 1995. General Zinni's task force successfully evacuated the UN force without a casualty. Commanding a JTF, which operated in a semi-permissive environment, required detailed coordination with Joint forces as well as multinational United Nations Forces, and required strong negotiating skills with the adversarial host nation, all of which obviously provided multiple developmental opportunities. Zinni's competency level and reputation at the national level grew considerably as a result of this operation.<sup>76</sup>

In July of 1986, General Powell assumed command of the Army's V Corps. General Powell's command consisted of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, the 3d Armored Division, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment, approximately 75,000 soldiers located in Germany.<sup>77</sup> Just five months after assuming command of the V Corps, the Iran-Contra crisis broke in the press and the National Security Advisor (NSA), Admiral Poindexter resigned his post. It was announced that President Reagan was to appoint Mr. Frank Carlucci as the new NSA. At this point Mr. Carlucci and Secretary Weinberger both contacted General Powell, insisting that he come back to Washington D.C. to assist Mr. Carlucci fix a broken National Security Council. General Powell had served both Mr. Carlucci and Weinberger as their Military Assistant. General Powell was deeply troubled and insisted that he could only give up his command if his Commander in Chief, the President, requested his service. Several days later the President personally asked General Powell to return to Washington as the Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs.<sup>78</sup>

Despite the short duration of his command, General Powell's brand of leadership left a mark on V Corps with his emphasis on training. The V Corps won two prestigious NATO training competitions in Europe. One was the Boselager Calvary Competition and the second was the Canadian Army Cup tank competition.<sup>79</sup>

### **Army Forces Command Experience**

After completing his tour as National Security Advisor to President Reagan, General Powell was offered several more postings in the interagency arena. He was asked by President-elect Bush to consider being the Deputy Secretary of State or the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. General Powell decided he wanted to return to the Army when the Army Chief of Staff, Carl Vuono, offered him command of the Army Forces Command.<sup>80</sup> General Powell was promoted to full General when he assumed his position as Commander in Chief of Forces Command. He had officially reached the pinnacle in rank within the Army. General Powell's position included the responsibility for training over a million soldiers within the continental United States, including active, reserve and National Guard units.<sup>81</sup> Again, General Powell's time in command would be very short. Four months after being promoted to General, General Powell was nominated by Secretary of Defense Cheney to President Bush as the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff replacing Admiral William Crowe.<sup>82</sup> This experience, albeit short, would provide General Powell experience in working closely with peers within his service. The ability to work in that environment required an ability to seek consensus on policies and further developed General Powell's interpersonal skill competency in that area.

### **JOINT, MULTINATIONAL AND INTERAGENCY EXPERIENCES:**

The joint, multinational and interagency experiences of both Generals are peppered throughout their careers. The experiences provided invaluable conceptual and interpersonal leadership competencies. But the technical strategic leadership competency gained from these assignments ultimately contributed to their abilities to function successfully at the highest levels of military and political leadership.

After selection for Brigadier General in 1989, General Zinni was assigned to the US European Command (EUCOM) as the Deputy Director of Operations.<sup>83</sup> This was General Zinni's first real Joint military assignment. As the Deputy Director of Operations within the J-3 (J-3 Ops), General Zinni was responsible for training and exercises within the EUCOM region. J-3 Ops also had responsibility for the command's Crisis Action Team (CAT). Crisis Action Teams were designed to focus on specific crisis situations for the Commander of EUCOM for



short durations. CATs could be as small as ten to fifteen people or could surge to a complete 24-hour capable Battle Staff capability of approximately 60 personnel.<sup>84</sup> General Zinni was directly responsible for the operation of the CAT and Battle Staff during his two year tour.

During that period, General Zinni's CAT coordinated operations for Operation Sharp Edge, a Non-Combatant Evacuation in Liberia<sup>85</sup> and Operation Provide Promise, a humanitarian airlift of supplies into Bosnia.<sup>86</sup>

In 1990 for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm General Zinni coordinated the throughput of military units and logistics from and through Europe into the Central Command area of operations.<sup>87</sup> He also personally participated in standing up and operations with EUCOM's Joint Task Force (JTF) Proven Force, which conducted air operations, combat search and rescue, and psychological operations from Turkey into Northern Iraq during 1991.<sup>88</sup> General Zinni spent a lot of time with the planners and forces conducting the operations. He actually flew with the pilots to observe some of the missions. General Zinni cites this as a valuable experience in understanding how an air campaign and special operations missions are planned and executed.<sup>89</sup>

Immediately following Operation Desert Storm, thousands of Kurdish Iraqi refugees began forming in adhoc refugee camps due to retribution operations by the Iraqi government. Secretary of State Baker observed the conditions and determined that a catastrophe was in the making. The Kurds were blaming the United States for encouraging them to revolt against Sadaam Hussein without US support. EUCOM was tasked to have relief supplies on the Ground in thirty-six hours. General Zinni's CAT team designed the initial response of United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE) and Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) forces. This was General Zinni's first broad scope experience with humanitarian operations since his operations as a MEU (SOC) commander in the Philippines. With the help of some Army Civil Affairs Captains, General Zinni planned the establishment of Joint Task Force Provide Comfort. General Zinni was tasked to deploy as the JTF's Deputy Commander under Air Force Major General Jim Jamerson, USAFE Operations Officer.<sup>90</sup>

General Zinni learned to work closely with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to coordinate medical supplies to the refugees. JTF Provide Promise also revealed the value of contracting Host Nation Support in operations. The decision to hire Turkish contractors for food, tentage and ground distribution reduced the costs of those services by 80 per cent.<sup>91</sup> General Zinni also worked very closely with Department of State personnel and personnel from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as well as the Center for Disease Control (CDC).<sup>92</sup>

General Zinni learned a lot from working with the CDC and NGO Medecins Sans Frontieres on the life cycles of diseases common to refugee situations and the nuances of establishing medical care that the host nations or receiving populace can maintain after departure of the assisting organizations. General Zinni would use these lessons later in his career during operations in Somalia.<sup>93</sup> This operation provided ample opportunity for General Zinni to continue this competency development in working with the cultures of other nations. The operations eventually supported over 500,000 refugees in the mountains without any infrastructure and required General Zinni to work closely with the Tribal leadership of the Kurds.<sup>94</sup>

JTF Provide Comfort eventually expanded into a Combined Task Force that included members from twelve other nations. LTG Shalikashvili, Deputy Commander for US Army Europe (DepUSAREUR) became the Commander of the Combined Task Force (CTF). Major General Jamerson became the Deputy Commander and General Zinni became the Chief of Staff. The expansion of this operation provided General Zinni additional developmental experience in coalition or multinational operations. General Zinni played a key role in designing organizational structures and relationships that were optimally adapted to the environment. These organizations were not always doctrinal. General Zinni convinced both LTG Shalikashvili, and eventually the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Powell, of the utility of the force structures developed as the operation developed.<sup>95</sup>

Operation Provide Comfort provided General Zinni with an ideal opportunity to develop a broad base of competency in Joint, Multinational and Interagency operations. Being so heavily involved in this humanitarian operation also contributed to his competency and reputation in operations described as Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). This experience would directly influence his frame of reference on MOOTW operations and contribute to his selection for future commands.

After General Zinni's assignment to EUCOM, he was promoted to Major General and assigned by the Marine Corps to Quantico, Virginia. However, that assignment was to be very short due to a humanitarian crisis brewing in Somalia. In 1992, General Zinni was selected to be the Operations Officer (J-3) for JTF Restore Hope for relief operations in Somalia. The JTF was formed around the staff of the First Marine Expeditionary Force under Lieutenant General Robert Johnston. General Zinni was selected due to his broad experience in both combat and humanitarian operations.<sup>96</sup> His recent experience in the mountains of Turkey/Iraq would be invaluable in Somalia.

While acting as the J-3 for JTF Restore Hope, the JTF Commander allowed General Zinni to work closely with and at times for the Department of States' United Nations' Liaison Office's Ambassador Robert Oakley.<sup>97</sup> General Zinni eventually represented Ambassador Oakley at committee meetings with the Somalis on politics, security, judicial, police, plus more. General Zinni also worked closely with the various factions security chiefs.<sup>98</sup> Working in a volatile environment and with multiple organizations, General Zinni was provided ample opportunity to develop the interpersonal skills required for consensus building and the negotiation process.

General Zinni also worked very closely with the UN's Humanitarian Operation Center's (HOC) Director, Phil Johnston. The HOC coordinated the activity of over 60 relief organizations in Somalia. General Zinni also worked closely with the United States' Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the United Nations.<sup>99</sup> General Zinni's dynamic role in this mission and the relationships that he would develop across national boundaries and throughout the interagency environment would serve him well in solidifying the technical aspects of his strategic perspective and facilitate his ability to assume positions of broader responsibility.

As previously described in the Command Experience section, General Zinni would later return to Somalia as the Commander of the First Marine Expeditionary Force and the Joint Task Force Commander responsible for the safe retrograde of United Nations Forces from Somalia. After his command of the First Marine Expeditionary Force, General Zinni was nominated and confirmed to assume the position of Deputy Commander in Chief of Central Command (DCINC) in September of 1996.<sup>100</sup>

General Zinni's time as the DCINC was marked notably by overseeing the implementation of the Downing Commission's recommendations related to force protection within the region due to the bombing of a US barracks at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia.<sup>101</sup> General Zinni also made trips throughout the region visiting US forces in the theater and meeting with senior military and national leaders. These trips reinforced the competencies in the multinational arena for cultural awareness and skills required in a leader to operate effectively in the central command region.<sup>102</sup>

In August of 1997, General Zinni became the Commander and Chief (CINC) of Central Command and attained the level of strategic leadership at which he had been developing competencies throughout his career. General Zinni received valuable guidance from three other senior commanders relative to his assuming role as a true strategic leader. The three senior leaders were, General Peay, outgoing CINC of Central Command, General Hoar, a retired Marine General and former CINC Central Command, and Mr. Ed Fugit, the Political Advisor

(POLAD) for General Peay. General Hoar, who had served with General Zinni as an advisor in Vietnam, recommended that General Zinni pay attention to relationships, "In that part of the world, personal relationships are often more important than formal agreements." Mr. Fugit reemphasized the role of relationship by recommending that General Zinni, "connect personally with both the leaders and the people." General Peay emphasized the old adage of leadership to "be your own man".<sup>103</sup>

General Zinni assumed command of a volatile region. His command included the territories of twenty-five sovereign countries. The prevalence of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction would provide challenges throughout his tenure in command.<sup>104</sup> General Zinni found himself responsible for duties not normally required of the military. The Clinton administration stressed the requirement for engagement throughout the world. The State Department lacked the resources required to accomplish the desires of the President. The role of diplomat often fell to the military regional combatant commanders.<sup>105</sup> General Zinni's recent experiences in EUCOM and CENTCOM provided the right opportunities for developing the skills required to act as the senior military commander in the region and to work closely with the Department of State and foreign governments in a very successful diplomatic role.

General Zinni was afforded ample opportunity as a General officer to serve in the joint regional combatant commands of the Department of Defense. He had extensive experience in joint and multinational operations across the spectrum of military operations. Early in his career he was exposed to multinational operations and the impact of cultural awareness in Vietnam and Okinawa. He had significant tactical experience in combat and working in the combined arms world of the Marine Air Ground Task Force. We will see that although General Powell had similar experiences as advisors in Vietnam, General Powell's exposure to the true joint and interagency arena started much earlier in his career. Contrasted with General Zinni's joint experience in the regional combatant commands, General Powell's experience was focused more within the executive branch of government in Washington, D.C.

General Powell's first joint assignment was as a Major when he was selected to serve as a White House Fellow in the Nixon Administration from 1972-1973. He requested and was assigned to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). General Powell had realized the importance of the budgeting process while being assigned to the Army Staff. While assigned to the OMB, General Powell met and served under some very influential individuals who would shape his perspective of government. The Director of the OMB was Mr. Caspar Weinberger, his deputy was Mr. Frank Carlucci. Both of these individuals would reach cabinet level

assignments in the Executive Branch of government and employ the talents of General Powell.<sup>106</sup> A Mr. Fred Malek became the Deputy Director of the OMB when Mr. Weinberger and Mr. Carlucci moved on to different assignments. General Powell was assigned to be the special assistant to the Deputy Director. In this capacity General Powell served primarily as an executive assistant. General Powell gained valuable insight into the inner-workings of the US Government while assigned to the OMB. The OMB was directly involved in every agency and department within the government due to its managerial and budgeting mission.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, as early as the rank of Major, General Powell developed a keen insight into the dynamics of working successfully within the interagency environment of the executive branch of the United States Government.

General Powell was afforded another great opportunity as a White House Fellow to shape his frame of reference when all of the Fellows were taken on a trip to the Soviet Union. General Powell traveled extensively through the Soviet Union and gained a perspective of the Soviet government and her people that would be valuable later in his career at the highest levels of government.<sup>108</sup>

After his battalion level command and Brigade command in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, General Powell was selected for and assigned as the Executive Assistant (EA) for the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. John Kester. General Powell had actually been offered two senior level staff jobs at that time. He was offered the EA job within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), and a position on the staff of the National Security Council. General Powell eventually went to the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Bernard Rogers, and requested his opinion on where the Army wanted him assigned. General Rogers wanted General Powell in the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense's (SECDEF's) office.<sup>109</sup> By working in the Special Assistant's office, General Powell gained great experience on how the Civilian leadership of the Department relate to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and with Congress and the American public. General Powell had already developed considerable competency in the joint, interagency and intra-agency environments by this stage of his career.

General Powell was promoted to Brigadier General while serving at OSD on June 1, 1979. General Powell was forty-two years old and the youngest General in the United States Army. With the promotion General Powell became the Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. Charles Duncan.<sup>110</sup> General Powell would eventually serve Mr. Graham Claytor and Mr. Frank Carlucci, in this same capacity.<sup>111</sup>

When General Powell's boss, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. Charles Duncan, was transferred to take over as the Secretary of the Department of Energy, he took General Powell along as part of his transition team. General Powell stayed at the Department of Energy for only a short time to assist Secretary Duncan in establishing his staff. This opportunity outside of the Department of Defense provided General Powell important knowledge of the intra-agency organizational structures and operations.<sup>112</sup>

During his tenure as Deputy Secretary of Defense Carlucci's Military Assistant, General Powell was asked by the Secretary of the Army, John O. Marsh Jr., to consider resigning his commission to become the Undersecretary of the Army. General Powell briefly considered this offer before approaching Deputy Secretary Carlucci and asking to be released from his duties on his staff to return to the U.S. Army. Brigadier General Powell received orders to report to the Army's 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Mechanized) in Colorado as the Assistant Division Commander for Operations and Training.<sup>113</sup>

Upon completion of his time as an Assistant Division Commander and as the Deputy Commander for the Army's Combined Arms Combat Development Activity, General Powell returned to Washington, D.C. to assume the post of Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberg in 1983. General Powell learned several strategic leadership insights from working with Secretary Weinberger. The SECDEF held large meetings where many personnel from his staff could attend. Every attendee was not expected to participate directly in the dialogue. However, the learning point was that attendance at these meetings provided a sense of value and contribution to the participants. General Powell would go on to use this technique later in his career.<sup>114</sup> General Powell also learned from Secretary Weinberger that the most troubling or problematic public issues should be engaged directly. To delay or side-step issues of public concern can reinforce the problems. Handling troubling public issues decisively will be seen as an attribute instead of a failure.<sup>115</sup> It was in his position as the SECDEF's Military Assistant that General Powell was first introduced to President Reagan by Secretary Weinberger.<sup>116</sup> As previously mentioned, General Powell left his position of Military Assistant to the SECDEF to assume command of the V Corps in Germany. The command tour was limited to only five months due to a crisis on the National Security Council.

The President appointed Mr. Frank Carlucci as his new National Security Advisor in the wake of the Iran Contra Hearings and in January of 1987 General Powell was assigned as the Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs.<sup>117</sup> This would begin a period when General Powell would be directly involved in the most senior level interagency process in the U.S. Government. General Powell was exposed daily to the briefings of President Reagan and

gained valuable insight into the decision making process of the President based on recommendations of the cabinet secretaries and the National Security Advisor.<sup>118</sup>

While a member of the National Security Council (NSC), General Powell and his associates recognized the requirement for an organization to facilitate the integration of the various departments and agencies' positions. The NSC formed the Policy Review Group (PRG). The core element of the PRG was made up of key subordinates from the Departments of Defense and State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Vice President's National Security Advisor. The PRG brought in key personnel from other government departments or agencies depending on the issue to be addressed.<sup>119</sup> The PRG performed the critical interagency coordination required to develop coherent national policy. General Powell was directly involved in coordinating this process and gained valuable perspective in the inner workings of the government. General Powell described the PRG as, "The Policy Review Group became our instrument for achieving a broadly understood and agreed-upon foreign policy within the administration."<sup>120</sup>

General Powell gained valuable experience in the PRG by facilitating the dialogue of personnel from various organizations who had predetermined positions and issues that had to be reconciled if policy issues were going to be finalized.<sup>121</sup> This experience not only greatly facilitated General Powell's competency development in the interagency process, but provided the opportunity to gain valuable experience in the interpersonal competencies critical to a strategic leader.

In November of 1987, Caspar Weinberger stepped down as President Reagan's Secretary of Defense. Frank Carlucci, the President's National Security Advisor assumed the position as Defense Secretary and Lieutenant General Colin General Powell was elevated to the position as President Reagan's National Security Advisor.<sup>122</sup> General Powell continued to develop his interagency and political skills as the National Security Advisor to President Reagan. General Powell worked very closely with Secretary of State George Schultz on a variety of issues. One historic accomplishment was engineering the diplomatic interchange and executive summit meetings with the Soviet Union. This effort resulted in both governments approving the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty.<sup>123</sup> One could argue easily that General Powell already filled a Strategic Leadership position in our government at this point. He operated at the highest levels of government and was the principal advisor to the President on national security issues. General Powell routinely met with the world's leaders at the time like the Soviet Unions' Mikhail Gorbachev,<sup>124</sup> and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.<sup>125</sup> By this point

General Powell had developed the competencies required to lead at the highest levels of our government and the military.

Shortly after the inauguration of President Reagan's successor, President George H. Bush, General Powell returned to the Army to command the Army's Forces Command as a four-star General. As was typical of General Powell's command assignments within the Army, the Joint community required his services again. President Bush nominated General Powell to become the twelfth Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>126</sup>

Almost immediately after assuming his position as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Powell acted as the principal military advisor to the Secretary of Defense and President in recommending committing military forces to overthrow Manuel Noriega and install the democratically elected Guillermo Endara as President of Panama. General Powell coordinated the actions of the Joint Chiefs, the Commander of Chief of Southern Command, General Maxwell Thurman. The operation, named Just Cause, was General Powell's first as Chairman and a success for the U.S. military and the new President.<sup>127</sup> General Powell continued as Chairman through the Bush administration and eventually oversaw the successful operation to drive Iraqi forces from Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm.<sup>128</sup>

## **DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCES VALUABLE TO A STRATEGIC LEADER.**

### **CONCEPTUAL COMPETENCY: FRAME OF REFERENCE DEVELOPMENT**

Generals Zinni and Powell both served in combat as junior officers. The Vietnam War provided the developmental experience that framed each officer's perception and beliefs relative to committing Marines and Soldiers to armed conflict. Both Generals Zinni and Powell witnessed the effects of high level government policy decisions on the individual Soldier or Marine at the tactical level.

The approach of each of these leaders towards the decision-making process can be traced to experiences in combat. Both of the Generals experienced the extreme confusion of direct combat and the fragmented nature of information available for the decision maker. The combat environment can be related to the VUCA descriptor of the strategic leader decision-making environment. Both officers learned to remain calm, assess the available information, and act decisively when required. It is unlikely that every officer that attains a strategic leadership position will be experienced in combat at the direct level. However, challenging and realistic training scenarios can be developed to put young leaders in the frame of mind to develop a calm reasoned approach to operate within the VUCA environment.



Both Generals Zinni and Powell pursued advanced education degrees in the civilian environment. Attending classes with non-military students and professors provides exposure to new experiences and points of view. Consequently, these fresh ideas and perspectives can be brought back into the military. The study of warfare, professional dialogue, and personal reflection all contribute to the education process as well as being exposed to the different perspectives of the civilian education environment. Generals Zinni and Powell's perception of the strategic environment and the role of leader were further refined by attendance of senior military education in the form of the National War College.

The Command and Leadership experiences of the Generals built the foundations on which their frame of reference developed. The Generals had varying time in command of service oriented organizations. General Powell's experience was routinely limited due to his being pulled from command positions to fill critical roles in the joint and interagency arena. However, he was able to develop many critical competencies during his command tours, which evolved from the platoon level to the command of Forces Command at the four star level. Although his time in command was limited, he developed a keen focus on the value of training his organizations, the value and contribution attributable to each soldier, and the importance of subordinates providing unfettered input to their senior commanders. Similarly, General Zinni commanded within his service at the platoon level through the three star level command of a Marine Expeditionary Force. General Zinni experienced similar training focused leadership development as General Powell. Unlike General Powell, General Zinni's experience in command was remarkably operational in the deployed and multinational environment. General Zinni was routinely faced with command challenges that involved external influences including host nation influences, multinational interfaces, and commanding in semi or non-permissive operational environments.

General Zinni's and Powell's experiences in the Joint, Multinational, and Interagency environments differed in the regional combatant command focus of General Zinni compared to the executive branch Washington, D.C. focus of General Powell. However, both career paths provided valuable insight on how different military services, government and non-governmental organizations perceived issues. These experiences further built on the foundation laid during their tactical level engagements, professional education, and career assignments. I would argue that without exposure to the joint and interagency environments available to both Generals they would never have attained the competencies required to assume the positions that they were eventually assigned.

#### TECHNICAL COMPETENCY: JOINT, INTERAGENCY, MULTINATIONAL, INTRA-AGENCY DEVELOPMENT

Both Generals were exposed to multinational environments early in the careers as Military Advisors in Vietnam. Although the experience was at the tactical level, and primarily focused on interpersonal relationships, it did provide valuable perspective on cultural impacts on the military. Experience working in different countries and realizing the cultural perspective that other nations bring to addressing issues is a critical developmental experience. Both officers were exposed early in their careers. However, they continued to gain experience in the multinational environment as they progressed throughout their careers.

General Zinni commanded a Battalion Landing Team that trained throughout northern and southern Europe. He commanded a Regiment based in Okinawa Japan and a MEU (SOC) that operated throughout the Pacific region. General Zinni would later work extensively in the Europe and Central Command's areas of responsibility as an operations officer and Joint Task Force Commander. These experiences provided great developmental insight into both multinational operations and joint operations. Planning for operations throughout the European AOR highlighted the interdependent capabilities of each of the Services and the Special Operations Command. General Zinni was provided the opportunity in operational context to work closely with the interagency and directly with international and non-governmental organizations. The experiences gained in many operations within this environment were perfect for developing the technical joint and multinational warfighting competencies required for his role as a strategic leader in a regional combatant command.

General Powell's experience in the joint world was primarily in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as either an Executive or Military Assistant. This focus provided great insight into the force development issues facing the most senior leaders in the joint community. He was exposed to as an active participant in the challenges faced daily by strategic leaders throughout the Department of Defense. General Powell was also provided the opportunity to work outside of the Department of Defense when he led a transition team in the Department of Energy. His experience as a White House Fellow also exposed him to the intricacy of the interagency process with his assignment within the Office of Management and Budget. All of these assignments contributed to the qualities that allowed him to serve successfully within the ultimate interagency environment of the National Security Council. The National Security Council assignment provided General Powell with an in depth appreciation for the interdependent aspect of coordinating the use of all elements of national power.

The advanced civilian education and the National War College opportunities provided both Generals a period of time to focus on developing their personal intellectual capacities for the joint and interagency environment. Education at their services staff colleges provided each General with detailed knowledge of their own services capabilities and an appreciation for the contributions available from other services in the joint environment.

Assignment of both Generals Zinni and Powell to service specific future force development projects provided exposure to the intricacies of the factors that strategic leaders face in shaping an organization for future success. General Zinni's participation in developing the MEU (SOC) concept and the Chief of Naval Operations Strategic Studies group provided valuable perspective of Service level concerns and capabilities that he had to consider when he became a strategic leader in the joint arena. Similarly, General Powell led several force development projects when he was assigned to the Army's Program Analysis and Evaluation Office and as the Deputy Commander for the Combined Arms Combat Development Activity. These projects allowed General Powell to understand force structure design in deployment planning. At the strategic level of leadership, this knowledge and understanding assists in balancing objectives with precise force deployments, thereby maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of applying the military element of national power.

#### INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCY: CONSENSUS BUILDING

The competency required of a Strategic Leader to build consensus for solutions to solve complex problems or attain strategic organizational objectives was a skill that was developed later in each of the General's careers. Although General Powell was exposed to the interagency early in his career with his White House Fellowship, he truly became a participant in the consensus building process when he was assigned as the Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs. It was in this assignment, where General Powell directly facilitated the policy development and decision-making process that included input from multiple agencies with varying positions, that his skill base was firmly established. This experience provided the critical competency development for his future strategic level positions as the National Security Advisor and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

General Zinni gained insight into this competency while assigned as the J-3 Operations Officer for EUCOM. In this position General Zinni was required to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of melding the differing capabilities provided by the separate components of the joint command. He would gain additional experience by working closely with various multinational factions, international and non-governmental organizations who possessed

sometimes greatly varying positions on how to address problems. His experiences in operations Provide Comfort and Restore Hope were critical to his competency development for consensus building.

## **CONCLUSION**

Both Generals Zinni and Powell had impressive careers that enabled the development of these competencies, which facilitated their success at the Strategic Level. Having a refined and broad based frame of reference, being technically proficient in the Joint, Multinational and Interagency environments, and honing the interpersonal skills to gain consensus for a course of action or policy, were critical to their successes as strategic leaders within the military.

Although combat experience cannot be guaranteed for each leader, it provides a critical frame of reference for senior decision makers, and facilitates skill level to excel in the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment of the strategic leader. It allows a leader to visualize the implications of their decisions at the lowest level within their organization.

A solid understanding and competency in the capabilities and cultures of the different services, multinational partners and the interagency is required of our senior leaders. We've seen by comparing these two leaders that there are different paths that can provide this competency. Command within your own service is valuable to attain baseline skills and knowledge of leadership and service capabilities. Assignment to a joint staff provides differing competencies dependent on the joint or interagency interface. Assignment within the Washington, D.C. joint or interagency environment provides competency development on the processes central to administering governmental agencies at the executive level. Joint experience in a combatant commander's regional command will provide a more operationally focused experience. These types of assignments will expose the officer to multinational issues and cultural challenges for military forces, which can develop an officer for strategic leadership positions in an operational command.

Leadership experiences provide the critical frame of reference on the effects of policy development and decision-making at the senior level. We've seen that very successful strategic leaders can gain that perspective without an exorbitant amount of time in the command. However, the types of leadership assignments were what defined or shaped their competency development. The command responsibilities of increasingly larger more complex organizations provided competency development opportunities in both interpersonal skills and conceptual frames of reference. Depending on the operational nature of the command, it can also provide valuable development of the Joint, Multinational, and Interagency competency.

The educational experiences of each of these Generals reveal the value of allowing leaders to expand their horizons through study. Allowing an officer to study in the civilian educational system provides new perspectives to develop expanded frames of reference. Reflection on the strategic level implications of national power at the National War College provided an opportunity for each General to dedicate time to personal growth were part of the building blocks that framed their strategic leadership styles.

Exposure to combat, or challenging decision-making in a VUCA environment, opportunities to command increasingly complex organizations, assignments within the Joint and Interagency environment, and opportunities to personally grow through civilian and military education lay the framework upon which the conceptual, technical, and interpersonal competencies develop. Despite diverse career paths, both Generals Zinni and Powell were exposed to these necessary developmental experiences to become successful and influential strategic leaders.

WORD COUNT= 12,419

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Tom Clancy, General Tony Zinni (Ret.), and Tony Kolz, *Battle Ready* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004), 350.

<sup>2</sup> "About General Anthony Zinni,"; available from <[http://www.generalzinni.com/about\\_general\\_zinni.htm](http://www.generalzinni.com/about_general_zinni.htm)>; Internet; accessed 20 October 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Colin Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 575.

<sup>4</sup> "BIOGRAPHY Colin L. Powell," 26 January 2005; available from <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/1349.htm>>; Internet; accessed 12 February 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Colonel Stephen A. Shambach, ed., *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 2nd ed. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College, 2004), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>14</sup> Clancy, 23-25.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 23-25.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>20</sup> Powell, 78.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 98.

- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., 99
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., 100
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 131.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 132.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., 134.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., 144.
- <sup>29</sup> Clancy, 109.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 52.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., 29.
- <sup>32</sup> Powell, 71.
- <sup>33</sup> Clancy, 94.
- <sup>34</sup> Powell, 104.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., 113.
- <sup>36</sup> Clancy, 147.
- <sup>37</sup> Powell, 118.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 145.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., 121.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 149.
- <sup>41</sup> Clancy, 147.
- <sup>42</sup> Powell, 198.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., 200.
- <sup>44</sup> Clancy, 152.
- <sup>45</sup> Powell, 152.
- <sup>46</sup> Clancy, 95.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., 96.

- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., 98.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., 106.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., 151.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., 134.
- <sup>52</sup> Powell, 53.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., 55.
- <sup>54</sup> Clancy, 147.
- <sup>55</sup> Powell, 172.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., 175.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., 189.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid., 196.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., 192.
- <sup>60</sup> Clancy, 153.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid., 154.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid., 157.
- <sup>64</sup> Powell, 202.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., 206.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid., 221.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid., 255.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid., 260.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., 262.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid., 264.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., 270.



<sup>73</sup> Clancy, 286.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 308.

<sup>78</sup> Powell, 319.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 389.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 395.

<sup>83</sup> Clancy, 162.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 241.

- <sup>98</sup> Ibid., 259.
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid., 247.
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid., 303.
- <sup>101</sup> Ibid., 304.
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid., 308.
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid., 311.
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid., 312.
- <sup>105</sup> Ibid., 318.
- <sup>106</sup> Powell, 159.
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid., 161.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid., 165.
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid., 226.
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid., 235.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid., 246.
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid., 237.
- <sup>113</sup> Ibid., 251.
- <sup>114</sup> Ibid., 276.
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid., 278.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid., 287.
- <sup>117</sup> Ibid., 320.
- <sup>118</sup> Ibid., 324.
- <sup>119</sup> Ibid., 326.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid., 327.
- <sup>121</sup> Ibid., 332.
- <sup>122</sup> Ibid., 337.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 367.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 363.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 396.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 421.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 509.

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